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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses key elements of current multicultural challenges of the traditional civic mission of schools. It appraises these challenges to suggest their strengths and weaknesses--contributions and pitfalls--with regard to fundamental U.S. principles of democracy endorsed by both multicultural challengers and traditional civic educators. Finally, it suggests how multicultural education and civic education can be conjoined in the mission and core curriculum of schools to support genuinely the principles and practices of democratic citizenship. (RJC)

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MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION AND THE CIVIC MISSION OF SCHOOLS

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MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION AND THE CIVIC MISSION OF SCHOOLS

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A long-standing and deeply rooted mission in American schools stresses common education for citizenship in a government based on consent of the governed and rights of individuals. Advocates of this traditional civic mission of schools assume that without effective education for democratic citizenship neither popular sovereignty nor the personal and political rights of individuals are secure. Furthermore, proponents claim that national unity is at risk unless the socially and culturally diverse people of the United States are educated to know and support in common certain civic principles that define them as a distinct people and polity.

A recent and emphatically expressed challenge to the traditional civic mission of schools in the United States of America highlights social and cultural diversity between different groups. This new multicultural mission is necessary, according to its leading advocates, to improve the old civic mission through recognition of long-neglected groups that have suffered inequitable discrimination. Most proponents claim they want to democratize and legitimize civic education for all groups in the United States, not to overturn and replace it with a radical alternative.

This chapter discusses key elements of current multicultural challenges of the traditional civic mission of schools. It next appraises these challenges to suggest their strengths and weaknesses--contributions and pitfalls--with regard to America's fundamental principles of democracy, which are endorsed by both multicultural challengers and traditional civic educators. Finally, it suggests how multicultural education and civic education can be conjoined in the mission and core curriculum of schools to support genuinely the principles and practices of

democratic citizenship.

MULTICULTURAL CHALLENGES OF THE CIVIC MISSION OF SCHOOLS

During the founding and early national eras of United States history, there was agreement among American leaders with different political agendas that there must be common education for citizenship if their new republic would endure. John Adams and Thomas Jefferson, for example, led opposing political parties while agreeing about the necessity of pervasive education for citizenship to develop common civic knowledge and commitment to core principles and practices of government in a republic. Jefferson no doubt concurred when Adams wrote, "Children should be educated and instructed in the principles of freedom. . . . It is not too much to say that schools for the [civic] education of all should be placed at convenient distances and maintained at the public expense" (Pangle & Pangle, 1993, p. 96).

This civic mission of public schools continued and expanded throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It generated virtually unchallenged components of the core curriculum that pertained to ". . . explicit and continuing study of the basic concepts and values underlying our democratic political community and constitutional order" (Butts, 1989, p. 308). Current indicators of this trend are the 1998 National Assessment of Educational Progress in Civics, which emphasizes knowledge of the principles and practices of government and citizenship in America's constitutional democracy (NAEP Civics Consensus Project, 1996), and the *National Standards for Civics and Government* upon which the national assessment is based (Center for Civic Education, 1994).

American civic educators today recognize and emphasize the striking social pluralism and

cultural diversity in the United States, as did their counterparts of the past. Civic educators of yesterday and today have understood that Americans have been and are a people bound primarily by common civic principles rather than common kinship, ethnicity, or religion--the ties that have bound most other nations in the world. A main point of civic education in the United States, therefore, has been to develop among diverse people a common commitment to principles and values expressed in such founding documents as the 1776 Declaration of Independence, the 1787 Constitution, and the 1791 Bill of Rights. The imperative of building and maintaining national unity from social and cultural diversity has pervaded the civic mission of the schools.

Multicultural challengers of this traditional civic education contend that the needs of diverse minority groups in America have been slighted by the long-standing and overarching concern with civic unity at the expense of cultural diversity. James Banks, for example, argues, "Citizenship education in the United States historically reinforced dominant-group hegemony and student inaction" (1997, p. 4).

Unlike traditional civic educators who stress cultural unity to bind diverse individuals and groups, multicultural educators emphasize differences between groups. And they extol cultural pluralism, "an ideal state of societal conditions characterized by equity and mutual respect among existing cultural groups. It contrasts sharply with cultural assimilation, or 'melting pot' images where ethnic minorities are expected to give up their traditions and blend in or be absorbed by the mainstream society or predominant culture" (Bennett, 1995, p. 13).

Multicultural educators uniformly applaud principles of democracy at the core of the traditional civic mission of American schools. "Almost every discussion of multiculturalism and multicultural education is placed in the context of democracy and citizen participation" (Ladson-

Billings, 1992, p. 308). Geneva Gay stresses education for democracy in concert with multicultural education in order to maximize the likelihood of developing genuine democratic citizenship among students of all cultural groups. Like many others who push for a multicultural mission in American schools, she maintains it will contribute greatly to the necessary narrowing of the great gap between grand ideals and flawed practices of democracy in the United States. She writes, "Multicultural interpretations of citizenship act as a critical voice, a civic conscience, and a reality filter for general education values and goals for democracy" (Gay, 1994, p. 103).

James Banks agrees with traditional civic educators that "an important goal of the schools in a democratic society is to help students acquire the knowledge, values, and skills needed to participate effectively in public communities" (1997, p. 1). This statement concurs exactly with mainline documents in civic education (Center for Civic Education, 1994; NAEP Civics Consensus Project 1996). But Banks and other multicultural educators concerned about the civic mission of schools maintain that this mission will be unfulfilled, as in the past, unless it is transformed by multicultural means and ends (199.7, pp. 10-17). Bennett expresses a widely shared view of these means and ends in her textbook for students in teacher education programs: "Multicultural education is an approach to teaching and learning that is based upon democratic values and beliefs, and seeks to foster cultural pluralism" (1995, p. 13).

Multicultural educators would "foster cultural pluralism" through a school curriculum and classroom instruction that favors 1) inclusion and accurate recognition of groups previously neglected or stereotyped, 2) exclusion of civic myths that falsify the history of democracy in America and foster monocultural assimilation, 3) preservation of minority group identities and cultures in the United States, and 4) promotion of cultural democracy. These four categories are

not presented as the exclusive or total multicultural agenda for reform of civic education. And they certainly are not intended to address a broader range of multicultural education reforms that extend far beyond the scope of civic education. Rather, they are emphasized as especially important general concerns about education for democratic citizenship shared by multicultural educators regardless of various philosophical differences that otherwise separate them. Further, they point to particular and pervasive criticisms among various kinds of multicultural educators of the civic mission in American schools and directions for transforming it to serve multicultural goals.

Inclusion and Accurate Recognition of Minority Group Achievements

Multicultural educators affirm their commitment to cultural pluralism through advocacy of inclusion and accurate recognition of women and certain ethnic and racial groups in the curriculum. And they would expose all students to multiple perspectives on particular events in history that reflect the diverse values of different cultural groups. They agree with multicultural historian Ronald Takaki, "Through their narratives and circumstances, the people of America's diverse groups are able to see themselves and each other in our common past. . . . By sharing their stories, they invite us to see ourselves in a different mirror" (1993, pp. 16-17). This "different mirror"--a symbol of multiple perspectives on the past and present of different cultural groups in the United States--can be used to reflect various multicultural meanings in classrooms from which some groups have been excluded.

Content analyses of widely used social studies textbooks and curriculum frameworks during the past half century provide ample evidence in support of multicultural educators' claims that certain groups (e.g., African Americans, Hispanics, and indigenous peoples of America) have

been marginally and inaccurately treated. A work titled provocatively, *Lies My Teacher Told Me: Everything Your American History Textbook Got Wrong*, offers many examples of stereotypes and other distortions of minority groups (Loewen, 1995).

Comparisons of textbooks and curriculum frameworks of the 1980s and 1990s with those of previous twentieth-century decades show great changes desired by multicultural educators (Lerner, Nogai, & Rothman, 1995; Patrick & White, 1992; Ueda, 1994). High school American history textbooks, for example, "have substantially increased their coverage of blacks, both absolutely and proportionally" during the past 40 years. Further, "They present blacks positively far more frequently than the whites" (Lerner, Nogai, & Rothman, 1995, p. 70). Similar trends have been noted on inclusive and positive recognition of women and indigenous peoples of America.

Despite documented improvements in textbooks and other curricular materials, multicultural educators have continued their calls for elimination in social studies and civic education of inaccurate, biased, stereotypical, and unfair treatment of minority groups in the United States. They have relentlessly claimed that the people of the United States constitute the world's most multicultural society. And they have demanded, therefore, that the curriculum of schools continue to become more inclusive and respectful of cultural diversity that is transforming America (Landry 1997, pp. 41-61; Loewen, 1995, pp. 307-312).

Exclusion of Civic Myths

If multicultural educators would include long-muted voices of culturally diverse persons and groups, they adamantly would exclude from the curriculum distorted, biased, or otherwise inaccurate treatments that mask inequities and falsely glorify heroes in the history of democracy in

the United States. Banks argues:

> In a democratic curriculum, students need to be taught about and have opportunities to acquire American democratic values while at the same time learning about American realities that challenge these ideals, such as discrimination based on race, gender, and social class. . . . [B]y emphasizing ways in which American history had actualized American democratic ideals--as we have often done in the past--students are likely to conclude that we have already attained these ideals and that, consequently, little work is needed to maintain a just and democratic society. (1997, p. 9)

The tendency toward civic myth-making--unwarranted "heroification" and glossed-over inequities suffered by various disadvantaged groups--is thoroughly documented in many content analyses of widely used civics and history textbooks. *Lies My Teacher Told Me: Everything Your American History Textbook Got Wrong* is full of striking examples of distortions and omissions in best-selling textbooks that falsify the story of American democracy through one-sided emphasis on glorious achievements (Loewen, 1995).

A particular target of multicultural opponents of civic myth-making and proponents of a transformed civic education is typical textbook treatments of the American founding era, 1760-1800, when fundamental principles of government were established. Most multicultural educators laud the founding documents and civic principles and values embedded in them (Banks, 1997; Ladson-Billings, 1992). But they fault instructional guides and textbooks for being insufficiently critical of shortcomings in the institutions and actions of the founders. James Banks and Cherry A. McGee Banks, for instance, charge the founders with denial of rights and privileges of

citizenship to African Americans, indigenous peoples of America, and women and thereby contradiction of the grand civic ideals of the founding documents. "One of its [multicultural education] major aims is to actualize for all the ideals that the founding fathers intended for only an elite few at the nation's birth" (1995, p. xi). According to multicultural educators, such unpalatable facts must be emphasized if the civic mission of American schools would be true to its democratic ideals.

Multicultural educators assert that traditional civic myths in the curriculum of schools have been used to foster "Americanization " or assimilation of diverse racial and cultural groups in the United States to monocultural unity. They claim, however, that assimilation has been falsely overemphasized to mask the persistent and growing cultural pluralism in the United States. Further, they equate the growth of social and cultural diversity with the growth of democracy. Thus, they denigrate civic education in support of assimilation as outmoded and antidemocratic (Pai &Adler, 1997, pp. 61-66; Bennett, 1995, pp. 84-86).

Preservation of Minority Group Identities and Cultures

Multicultural educators believe that equitable treatment of diverse minority groups involves more than tolerance of differences. It also requires respect and security for the rights of minority groups to maintain their members and sustain their cultural integrity. Thus, multicultural educators tend to promote protected and preserved identities for certain minority cultural or racial groups in the United States. And they advocate teaching and learning in schools that favors particular rights and privileges for certain minority groups (Davidman & Davidman, 1997, pp. 13-27).

Multicultural educators reject the "melting pot" symbol of American unity and favor

maintenance of official group identities, such as African American, Hispanic, Asian American, and Native American (Hollinger, 1995, pp. 19-49; Ueda, 1994, pp. 137-144). They use the stained glass window, tapestry, and mosaic to project images of cultural pluralism in opposition to the monocultural tendencies of the traditional civic mission of schools (Bennett, 1995, p. 86).

Social historian Reed Ueda describes how multicultural education in schools has begun to transform the traditional civic mission toward the preservationist goal of cultural pluralism:

> Whereas schools for most of the twentieth century endeavored to build a supra-ethnic identity, in the late twentieth century schools gave priority to the preservation and inculcation of group identities and cultures. The schools still taught about the shared values that underlay American national identity, but they also cultivated alternative identities and cultures. (1994, pp. 140-141)

Promotion of Cultural Democracy

Advocacy for preservation of cultural pluralism and group rights, at the center of the multicultural mission in schools, leads directly to civic education for cultural democracy. James Banks says, "A central tenet of cultural democracy is that individuals and groups must have cultural freedom in a democratic nation-state, just as they have political freedom" (1997, p. 123).

Current conceptions of cultural democracy are anchored in the work of early twentieth-century cultural pluralists. Horace Kallen, a precursor of current multiculturalist thought, was the most influential and articulate of these early opponents of the "melting pot" and monocultural unity. He urged preservation of cultural groups and viewed America as a "federation of cultures"--a cultural democracy composed of unmeltable ethnic groups:

> [T]he outlines of a great and truly democratic commonwealth become discernible. Its form is that of the federal republic; its substance a democracy of nationalities, cooperating voluntarily and autonomously in the enterprise of self-realization through the perfection of men according to their kind. . . . The political and economic life of the commonwealth is . . . the foundation and background for the realization of the distinctive individuality of each *nation* that composes it . . . . Thus "American civilization" may come to mean . . . a multiplicity in a unity, an orchestration of mankind. (1924, p. 124)

Kallen believed that ancestry is destiny, that one's genetic inheritance determines one's fundamental behavioral characteristics or culture. He asserted "What is unalienable in the life of mankind is its . . . psycho-physical inheritance. Men . . . cannot change their grandfathers. . . . The selfhood which is inalienable in them . . . is ancestrally determined, and the happiness which they pursue has its form implied in ancestral endowment. This is what, actually, democracy in operation assumes" (Kallen, 1924, pp. 122-123).

Kallen believed that certain human differences are immutable and that all human beings are not fundamentally alike and potentially transformable in their ethnic identities and cultures. Thus, basic human differences could not dissolve in any "melting pot." Rather, they must be identified, protected, and perpetuated (Higham, 1984, pp. 200-214). According to historian David A. Hollinger, Horace Kallen's doctrine "of enduring ethno-racial groups located him at the proto-separatist extreme of cultural pluralism" (1995, p. 93).

Kallen portended key ideas of late twentieth-century multicultural educators. They

currently recommend that their idea of cultural democracy, an expansive adaptation of Kallen's concept to fit contemporary conditions and agendas, should be infused into the civic mission of schools (Banks, 1997, pp. 122-139; Parker, 1996b, pp. 192-206). Thus, multicultural education would be a means to "empowerment" for groups long oppressed or marginalized (Sleeter & Grant, 1987, p. 421). Unless this happens, they contend, the civic mission of schools will not attend fully to the goals of democracy, which they link to rights for diverse minority groups to preserve and promote their cultures and to receive public resources based on group identity.

AN APPRAISAL OF MULTICULTURAL CHALLENGES

Many indicators point to the success of multicultural challenges of the civic mission of schools: professional association proclamations in support of multicultural education, courses on multicultural education that professional schools of education require for the certification of teachers, state curriculum frameworks and guides that emphasize cultural diversity in terms of the multicultural education agenda, and the many programs of professional association meetings that feature prominent multicultural educators in discussions of the trends and issues of their burgeoning academic field. The central theme of the 1998 meeting of the American Educational Research Association--"Diversity and Citizenship in Multicultural Societies"--is further evidence of the high status of multicultural education among professional educators.

In the title of his latest and hottest book, Nathan Glazer proclaims *We Are All Multiculturalists Now*. "Multiculturalism of some kind there is, and there will be. The fight is over how much, what kind, for whom, at what ages, under what standards" (Glazer, 1997, p. 19). In his acknowledgment of multiculturalism's success in the American education establishment,

Glazer raises a disturbing question: "Will multiculturalism undermine what is still, on balance, a success in world history, a diverse society that continues to welcome further diversity, with a distinctive and common culture of some merit?" (1997, p. 20).

Critics of multiculturalism and multicultural education have sounded alarms in response to disturbing questions like the one raised by Glazer. Consider the titles of six books published during the 1990s that criticize various aspects of multiculturalism and multicultural education in the United States: *The Disuniting of America: Reflections on a Multicultural Society* (Schlesinger, 1992); *The Twilight of Common Dreams: Why America is Wracked by Culture Wars* (Gitlin, 1995); *Postethnic America: Beyond Multiculturalism* (Hollinger, 1995); *The Menace of Multiculturalism* (Schmidt, 1997); *Against the Multicultural Agenda* (Webster, 1997); and *The Unmaking of Americans: How Multiculturalism Has Undermined America's Assimilation Ethic* (Miller, 1998). Three of these books are written by prominent scholars of long-standing orientation toward the political left (Gitlin, 1995; Hollinger, 1995; Schlesinger, 1992), who usually have been associated with progressive or liberal causes. The misgivings of these scholars and like-minded colleagues about certain elements of the multicultural agenda are "red flags" in the pathway of multicultural challenges of the civic mission of schools.

What strengths and weaknesses of the multicultural mission in schools are revealed by the literature of scholarly criticism? What elements of the multicultural education literature should be incorporated into the civic mission of schools? And which elements should be rejected? The following responses to these questions are directed to the needs of elementary and secondary school educators in their roles as developers of curriculum and deliverers of instruction. Thus, they might be assisted in screening the multicultural education literature to sort sense from

nonsense, the warranted from the unjustified or insupportable statements and viewpoints. The following appraisal of the literature of multicultural education pertains to three categories: 1) conceptions of culture, democracy, and identity, 2) treatments of diversity and unity, and 3) pursuit of inclusion and recognition.

Conceptions of Culture, Democracy, and Identity

Multicultural educators profess support for America's fundamental principles and values of democracy, such as freedom, equality, and popular sovereignty. They especially emphasize freedom and fault traditional civic education for inadequate treatment of this core value of democracy (Davidman & Davidman, 1997, p. 49). "The goal of multicultural education in the broader sense is an education for freedom" (Banks, 1994, p. 6).

Some conceptions of culture and identity in the literature of multicultural education, however, are less compatible than others with the democratic value of freedom. For example, Horace Kallen's conception of cultural pluralism, in its deterministic implications for personal identity, is inimical to individual freedom of choice. When Kallen asserted, "Jews or Poles or Anglo-Saxons, in order to cease being Jews or Poles or Anglo-Saxons, would have to cease to be", he implied cultural determinism as an inhibiter of personal freedom to choose or modify one's identity (1924, pp. 122-123). Later he wrote "that people are irreducibly different from one another and that this difference is an inalienable right" (Kallen, 1971, p. 147).

Kallen and current multicultural educators in agreement with him practically reify the idea of culture, as if it were an immutable entity beyond their power to modify. For example, "Ethnicity and culture are key determinants of individuality" (Gay, 1994, p. 80). Certainly these factors influence individuality, but if they determine it, then the person's degrees of freedom to

choose, develop, or modify her or his identity and personality are grossly diminished or nonexistent.

Other examples of determinism in the literature of multicultural education pertain to the confounding of culture and race, which is revealed in such expressions as "black culture" or "white culture." These terms, which suggest that one's biological inheritance determines culture and behavior, appear in highly regarded publications of multicultural educators (Bennett, 1995; Butler, 1995; Howard, 1996; Sleeter, 1995).

This kind of conflation of race and culture was typically expressed in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century publications by white supremacists such as Arthur de Gobineau and Madison Grant (Herman, 1997, pp. 45-75; Higham, 1963, pp. 156-157). However, social scientists of the twentieth century clearly and compellingly have rejected the reactionary view that human behavior is determined by a person's "race" (Cohen, 1998, pp. 11-59).

"In its most general sense within the social sciences, culture refers to the socially inherited body of learning characteristic of human societies" (D'Andrade, 1996, p. 161). It has nothing to do with "race"--an idea totally discredited by biological scientists (Rex, 1993, pp. 536-530). Further, biologists and social scientists concur, "Culture is not directly associated with race; men of different biological stocks participate in the same culture, men of the same biological stock have different cultures" (Berelson & Steiner, 1964, p. 648). So, as the black historian Nathan Huggins wrote, "An Afro-American and the grandson of a Polish immigrant will be able to take more for granted between themselves than the former could with a Nigerian or the latter with a Warsaw worker" (Schlesinger, 1992, p. 87). K. Anthony Appiah, the Ghanaian-born philosopher at Harvard, rejects the racially determined concept of culture "because it proposes as a basis for

common action the illusion that black (and white and yellow) people are fundamentally allied by nature" (1998, p. 41). And the social historian John Higham warns, "Multiculturalists in general see group identities as fixed and in that way they can resemble racists" (Hackney, 1994, p. 8).

Deterministic expressions about cultural pluralism and human behavior, especially those that confound the concepts of race and culture, deserve rejection by designers of curriculum and instruction for elementary and secondary schools. They contradict consensual knowledge among biologists and social scientists and civic traditions of freedom in the United States.

Some prominent, current multicultural and democratic educators recognize and criticize deterministic thinking among colleagues. Walter Parker, for example, warns that the "identity politics that inevitably comes with pluralism" sometimes brings about "a new politics of excessive group-interest" that is inimical to democracy. He also argues against conceptions of culture and identity "that would make group identity into something natural, etched in primordial stone. Not only are ethnic identities not inborn, they are circumstantial and even voluntary to some extent"(1996a, p. 119). These are worthy criticisms and warnings by an advocate of cultural pluralism and democracy against unworthy ideas of some colleagues.

The individual's right to liberty has been an overarching principle and aspiration of most Americans from the founding of the republic until today. This right to liberty includes the freedom to choose, within broad natural and physical limits, who one is or might become. Any conception of personal or group identity in the United States of America that threatens this basic liberty opposes deeply rooted civic traditions and public opinions that favor fluidity and free choice against any kind of determinism or coercion. This sentiment against an illiberal cultural determinism in the education of Americans is expressed emphatically by political scientist Jean

Bethke Elshtain, "My democratic dream was nurtured by a presumption that none of us is stuck inside our own skins; our identities and ideas are not reducible to our membership in a race, or ethnic group, or a sex. . . . [E]ducation is about opening the world up, not imprisoning us in terms of race, gender, or ethnicity" (1995, pp. 85-85).

Another questionable idea in the multicultural education literature is cultural democracy as a "federation of many cultures" expressed originally by Horace Kallen and repeated currently in a modified form by prominent multicultural educators. Walter Parker, for example, presents his conception of cultural pluralism and democracy in response to debates about what *e pluribus unum* should mean. To him, this American motto "means the political one alongside the cultural many" rather than cultural diversity within an overriding civic and political unity (1996a, p. 121). To Parker, this formulation represents "advanced ideas about democracy" and requires commitment to some type of protected and preserved autonomy for many separate ethnic and cultural groups within the United States of America (Parker, 1996a, pp. 105-125). Would it also require subordination of an overarching American national identity and culture to the primacy of multicultural identities?

Parker's "advanced ideas" promote cultural democracy with its stress on group rights. He also recognizes the importance of traditional individual rights at the core of liberal democracy. But can these two types of rights easily coexist? In inevitable cases of conflict between them, would group rights tend to trump individual rights and thereby raise cultural democracy above liberal democracy? If so, would the freedom of individuals to choose or shape their identities be diminished or foreclosed in favor of group-based ancestral claims on them, treated as if they were immutable or "etched in stone"? Is the concept of cultural democracy, which in certain instances

may promote a group's rights to the detriment of an individual's rights, a compelling guide to America's future?

The "federation of cultures" or cultural democracy concept is an inaccurate and unlikely portrayal of how the United States has been or will be. It fits social reality in India, Russia, Nigeria, or South Africa, for example, better than the United States. India, South Africa, and Nigeria are much more multicultural than the United States of America by such criteria as the number and variety of extensively and enduringly used primary languages and long-standing, territorially based ethnic identities. Both the federal republics of India and Russia, furthermore, are federations of distinct national or cultural groups, which occupy distinct territories that historically have been their own. Some multiculturalists might wish to reconstruct radically the United States of America into a federation or union of many cultures or nations, but this country neither is nor has been such a multicultural or multinational federation as the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia were before they disintegrated.

Educators who adhere to scholarly standards of accuracy must reject certain statements in the multicultural literature, which if applied to curriculum development and classroom instruction would lead to gross distortions of reality. And educators with firm commitments to certain values in the American civic tradition, such as the right of individuals to choose or modify their identities, as freely as possible, must be wary of curricular prescriptions that contradict these values.

Treatments of Diversity and Unity

Multicultural educators persistently claim that the United States is the most multicultural society in the world, which buttresses their opposition to assimilation and its "melting pot" metaphor. They would teach students in American history and civics courses that assimilation is a

declining phenomenon, and that its demise is desirable.

Does the evidence support claims of multicultural educators about the decline and likely demise of assimilation and any kind of national cultural unity? "No," is the recent answer of prominent sociologists and social historians (Alba, 1990; Glazer, 1998; Higham, 1993; Lieberson & Waters, 1988; and Ueda, 1994). They marshal data persuasively to conclude that the process of assimilation continues to be a dynamic force for the integration of culturally different minorities into an American civic life and national culture. "Assimilation, properly understood, is neither a dead hope nor a demeaning concept" (Glazer, 1998, p. 16).

Most citizens of the United States today see themselves primarily as Americans and only secondarily, if at all, as something else. In answer to the question in the national census about one's ancestry, millions of Americans express "multiple ancestries" (Glazer, 1998, p. 33). Their ancestry is too mixed and/or remote from "old world" antecedents to sustain any sense of ethnic or national identity other than identification with the United States of America. If pressed to find their "roots" most people in the United States would discover *two or more* ethnic strains in their ancestry. Such mixtures lead to identification primarily as an "American" (Alba, 1990, p. 315; Lieberson & Waters, 1988, p. 45; Miller, 1998, pp. 142-146).

Ethnic mixture or amalgamation, which yields a mixed or an American identity, results from intermarriages. Thomas Sowell reports, "More than half of all marriages of Americans of German, Irish, British, or Polish ancestry are with people of different ethnicity, and Italian and Japanese Americans are not far behind" (1981, pp. 286-287). The rates of intermarriage among all European ethnic groups have been very high during the 1980s and 1990s. Today, most non-Hispanic whites born in the United States are of mixed ancestry (Miller, 1998, p. 143). Hispanic

intermarriage rates are also significant. In 1990, for example, it was 28 percent for marriages involving Mexican Americans, 35 percent for Puerto Ricans, 26 percent for Cubans, and 44 percent for marriages involving other Hispanic groups (Miller, 1998, p. 144). Interracial marriages, too, have increased greatly, although the percentage of black-white marriages is still minuscule in comparison to the overall rate of intermarriages (Glazer, 1998, p. 33; Hollinger, 1995, p. 166; Lieberson & Waters, 1988, p. 182). However, in 1990, the interracial marriage rate for Asian Americans was 30 percent. And today 50 percent of Japanese Americans marry someone outside their ethnic group (Miller, 1998, p. 144).

There is little doubt, if one refers to the evidence, that twentieth-century trends on interethnic and interracial marriages have blurred and broken down group differences in favor of a more unified American national identity. Further, social historian John Higham uses the evidence on intermarriage and ethnic identity to conclude, "Americans are a people molded by processes of assimilation. An adequate theory of American culture will have to address the reality of assimilation as well as the persistence of differences" (1993, p. 209).

Assimilation in the United States tends to be a reciprocal process involving many culturally diverse groups, which produces a fluid, dynamic, compound national culture. The Northern and Western European component of this unfinished, evolving American national culture (especially the Anglo-Saxon strain) is and will be very significant. But the complex and multifaceted American national culture and identity neither was nor is the product of only one heritage representing a single civilization or region of the world. Rather, social historian Reed Ueda concludes, "A world melting pot is forming in the United States in which the question 'whose identity and culture?' is increasingly irrelevant" (1994, p. 153). It is relevant, however, to

recognize the continuing reality of assimilation, reciprocal and otherwise, and the American national culture and identity that it synthetically produces.

Nathan Glazer argues from compelling evidence that assimilation is "still the most powerful force affecting the ethnic and racial elements of the United States" (1998, p. 33). The process may be different today from what it was during the early years of the twentieth century, but it still affects, more or less strongly, many different persons and groups. Some persons and groups in the United States freely reject or resist assimilation and responsibly accept the consequences of their choice. People have this freedom in an open society. They also have the freedom to seek and accept assimilation, which most people in America have done. Thus, it is misleading and miseducative for multicultural educators to claim in their proposals and materials for curriculum and instruction in schools that assimilation is dead or undesirable. Clearly assimilation is not defunct and its desirability should be open to debate and inquiry in classrooms and public forums.

Glazer explains the reluctance among multicultural educators and their supporters to recognize the continuing reality in the United States of assimilation and its "melting pot" metaphor. "Our problem in recognizing this has to do with one great failure of assimilation in American life, the incorporation of the African American, a failure that has led in its turn to a more general counterattack on the ideology of assimilation" (1998, p. 16).

Pursuit of Inclusion and Recognition

Philosopher Charles Taylor explains that multiculturalism, whether advanced by African Americans or other advocates, is primarily about the "politics of recognition." He writes:

The thesis is that our identity is partly shaped by recognition or its absence

> . . . and so a person or group of people can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people or society around them mirror back to them a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves. Nonrecognition or misrecognition can inflict harm, can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being. (1994, p. 25)

The multicultural movement for accurate inclusion and recognition in the school curriculum of previously ignored or marginalized groups is justified aptly by Taylor. Further warrants for this kind of inclusive recognition of persons and groups can be found in the civic culture of America, which stresses respect for minority rights. Civic education certainly is flawed if it fails to promote tolerance of differences that contributes to recognition and respect for the rights of everyone. Finally, it is plausible that emphatic expressions of recognition and respect for different cultural and racial groups in the school curriculum will decrease social and political alienation among these groups and increase positive identification with the American civic culture.

These justifiable accolades for the educational strategy of "inclusion and recognition" should, however, be accompanied by a warning against overzealous pursuit of this good idea. Promotion through curriculum and instruction in schools of inaccurate, biased, or otherwise unwarranted statements about persons or groups is wrong, regardless of the benign motives that may have impelled this effort. Certainly, inclusion in the curriculum of a multicultural mythology is just as objectionable as the civic mythology and "heroification" decried by multicultural educators. In the interest of sound civic education, it must be avoided.

Regrettably, however, careless and uncritical pursuit of inclusion and recognition of

certain cultural groups has produced some notable errors and distortions of reality in textbooks and instructional guides used extensively in schools. Three egregious, but representative, examples are presented to alert educators in elementary and secondary schools to the ever-present need for critical vigilance in their evaluation and adoption of curricular materials for use by students. These examples are not presented to discredit the potentially worthy goal of accurate, warranted inclusion and recognition in the school curriculum of women and different minority groups in the United States. They are presented, however, as representative of a general problem in the literature of multicultural education, which should be noted and fixed.

The first egregious example pertains to the hypothesis of archeologists that the original peopling of ancient America occurred thousands of years ago when nomads in Siberia crossed the "Bering land bridge" into the part of North America known to us as Alaska. From these beginnings, groups of wanderers eventually spread to all parts of the continent. Abundant evidence to support this hypothesis is synthesized cogently in *The Great Journey: The Peopling of Ancient America*, a book favorably reviewed by scholars (Fagan, 1987).

Despite ample documentation and virtual consensus among scholars, some prominent multicultural educators reject the "Bering land bridge" theory in favor of an explanation presumably more sensitive to the feelings of today's descendants of the indigenous peoples of America. For example, the following commentary appears in a leading textbook on multicultural education used by undergraduate students in teacher education programs throughout the United States:

> What is the native perspective that should become part of the revised curriculum? . . . The Bering Straits migration theory should be treated with

> great skepticism since there is absolutely no evidence (except logic) to support it. Indian people generally believe that they evolved or were created in the Americas. This viewpoint should be respected although it is acceptable to discuss the possibility of migration as an alternative explanation. The point is that there is no empirical evidence to support any particular migration theory. (Bennett, 1995, p. 307)

A second notable example of overzealous pursuit of inclusion and recognition pertains to textbook treatments of African Americans. It certainly is good that African Americans are more inclusively and accurately presented in textbooks today. But it is miseducative and wrong for textbook publishers to inaccurately glorify African Americans. Yet this kind of multicultural mythmaking is all too common. Consider the following example about treatments of Crispus Attucks in widely used secondary school American history textbooks.

Distinguished historian John Hope Franklin reports that Crispus Attucks was a fugitive slave living freely in Boston when he died in the "Boston Massacre"--one of five American men shot and martyred by British troops in an event that presaged the American Revolution (Franklin & Moss, 1988, pp. 65-66). The names of the other martyrs to the Revolution are not commonly known. But Attucks, who also was a little-known figure, has emerged in textbooks of the late twentieth-century as a "bonafide hero" of the American founding era. Examination of several secondary school American history textbooks reveals that Attucks, once a rather obscure person, is treated more extensively than many others whose accomplishments were vastly more significant in the causes, conduct, and consequences of the War of Independence (Lerner, Nagai & Rothman, 1995, pp. 81-84).

A concluding factual note on the relative significance of Crispus Attucks in the American Revolution is that his name does not appear in such well-researched reference works on persons in American history as the *Dictionary of American Biography*, the *Oxford Companion to American History*, and the *Concise Dictionary of American History*. *The Reader's Companion to American History* includes one very brief mention of Attucks within the entry on the Boston Massacre: ". . . among the victims was Crispus Attucks, a man of black or Indian heritage" (Foner & Garraty, 1991, p. 124). Does this meager historical record justify the "heroification" of Attucks? Has it happened only in excessive pursuit of the new multicultural mission of schools?

A third example of a suspect or fraudulent interpretation of history by multicultural educators concerns the Iroquois Confederation. This highly creative and effective political structure brought commendable unity to the governance of the five nations of indigenous peoples that founded it.

The Iroquois Confederation was discussed admiringly, if briefly, at the Albany Congress in 1754, when representatives of seven colonies of British North Americans met to discuss unified action for their mutual defense after the outbreak of war between Britain and France. Benjamin Franklin, the leading representative of Pennsylvania, proposed the Albany Plan of Union, a confederation of colonies under the British Crown. In his unsuccessful attempt to win formal approval of his plan, Franklin pointed approvingly to the Iroquois Confederation and challenged his colleagues to do as well as the Iroquois peoples had done in providing politically for their mutual defense and well being.

Franklin's dream of confederal unity among the British American colonies became reality eventually through the Continental Congress that represented the United States of America during

the War of Independence against the British. Franklin's Albany Plan of Union influenced the new American nation's first constitution, the Articles of Confederation. And let us remember that in his original advocacy of the Albany Plan of Union, Franklin spoke admiringly of the Iroquois Confederation. Does this justify current proposals by multicultural educators to teach students that the federal government framed by Americans in 1787 was heavily influenced by the Iroquois peoples and their confederation?

> Consider this claim in a recently published book on multicultural education:
>
> Most Americans are aware of the fact that our United States government was based on the English view of rights derived from the Magna Carta and the eighteenth-century political philosophy of natural rights, but the form of our government may, in fact, also be modeled after an alliance of tribes that had been formed by a group of Native Americans before the Europeans landed in the Western Hemisphere. This alliance, known as the *Iroquois Confederation*, was based on the idea of cooperation among diverse nations. . . . (Timm, 1996, p. 19)

Another example from a prominent multicultural education publication more strongly and broadly claims that indigenous peoples of North America influenced the design of the United States Constitution and federal government:

> Native peoples, particularly those who lived in the northeastern part of the continent, provided the model for many aspects of American democracy that differed from what was known in Europe: a federal system of government, the separation of civil from military authorities, the concept of

> impeachment, admission of new territories as states . . . the caucus, an egalitarianism that disallowed slavery, and a political voice for women. Most of this has been left out of the history books, which is typical of the fate of a colonized people. (Bennett, 1995, p. 91)

"Most of this has been left out of the history books," one might argue, because it is false. And the few curricular materials that have included this kind of misinformation deserve scholarly criticism and condemnation, not praise.

The Iroquois Confederation is a worthy achievement on its own terms and within its own context. Its worth does not depend upon claims that it influenced the form and function of constitutional government in the United States. These claims, however, appear to have little or no validity. For example, anthropologist Elizabeth Tooker concludes her recent study of "The United States Constitution and the Iroquois League" with this disclaimer: "The evidence presently available, then, offers little support for the notion that the framers of the Constitution borrowed from the Iroquois ideas respectiang the proper form of government, ideas that were, in fact, radically different from those familiar in Western civilization that were subsequently incorporated into the Constitution" (1994, p. 115). Further, the four-volume *Encyclopedia of the American Constitution*, an authoritative work of scholarship by the world's leading experts on United States government, includes no mention of the Iroquois Confederation (Levy, Karst & Mahoney, 1986). One will search in vain among the works of prominent founding-era scholars (e.g., Bernard Bailyn, Pauline Maier, Forrest McDonald, Gordon Wood, etc.) for any discussion of the supposed impact of the Iroquois Confederation or other political ideas of the indigenous peoples of America on the federal republic and Constitution of the United States.

Historian Hazel Hertzberg, an authority on the culture of the Iroquois, made no claims for the influence of the Iroquois Confederation on the federal government of the United States. Rather, she offered these words of caution:

> We know a great deal about the political organization of the Confederacy, from both Iroquois sources and the accounts of observers. But in seeking to describe its form and functioning, it is important to use our own political terms carefully so that we do not transfer our meanings to theirs and thus distort the facts. For example, while the Confederacy was representative government, its method of decision-making was different from ours, being based not on a majority but on unanimity. (1966, p. 109)

Our confirmed knowledge of the Iroquois Confederation indicates that it was more like the ill-fated Articles of Confederation than the Constitution of 1787, which according to both its supporters and critics in the ratification debates of 1787-1788, offered a brand new or unprecedented concept of federalism. If one reasons by analogy, it is clear that the logical (if not empirical) connection of the Iroquois Confederation is to the Articles of Confederation (hardly a concept of federalism that "differed from what was known in Europe") not to the 1787 Constitution of the United States.

Once more, it is important to laud multicultural educators for their efforts to include and recognize in the school curriculum notable achievements of minority groups, especially groups previously ignored or stereotyped. It is equally important, however, to evaluate carefully these well-intentioned proposals for inclusion and recognition to prevent the miseducation of students that results from inaccurate information or unwarranted interpretations of people, ideas, and

events in history.

CURRICULAR RESPONSES TO MULTICULTURAL CHALLENGES

Civic education unmodified by multicultural education is flawed in its failure to recognize and respect cultural diversity and dissent by various minorities in response to civic injustices. In the absence of multicultural challenges, lessons in civics typically have glossed over maltreatment of minorities and glorified the deeds of some Americans while neglecting or even denigrating the positive contributions of "others." Civic education is undemocratic, unjust, and untrue when it disdains or disrespects the participation and achievements of women and minority groups in the common history and culture of the United States.

Political scientist Amy Gutmann proposes a multicultural remedy to some unacceptable traditions in civic education. She would teach students "to understand and appreciate the social contributions and life experiences of the various groups that constitute society. Such understanding and appreciation define one common conception of multicultural education, a conception compatible with the principles of democratic education" (1996, p. 158).

Gutmann recognizes appropriately that not all conceptions of multicultural education are equal in merit or fit with principles of democracy at the center of the school's civic mission. Certain multicultural challenges of the civic mission of schools are unwarranted and thereby deserve rejection by curriculum developers and teachers, as revealed by the preceding discussion in this chapter. Other challenges, however, as noted by Gutmann, are warranted and should be accepted into the core curriculum. Civic education in American schools can only be improved by incorporation of the following elements of multicultural education:

- Accurate inclusion and recognition in the school curriculum of long-neglected or negatively stereotyped minority groups who have contributed significantly to American history and civic life;
- Warranted curricular emphasis on cultural diversity in conjunction with civic unity in the past and present of the United States;
- Inquiry by students on discrepancies between American civic ideals and realities, and efforts, both successful and failed, to narrow the gap that has separated the promises from the practices of American civic life;
- Affirmation of core principles of American constitutional democracy that constitute a unifying civic culture for a culturally diverse society.

The preceding list is a coherent educational agenda for conjoining multiculturalism with civism (i.e., the principles and practices of democratic citizenship) in the mission of American schools. The primary curricular response should be practical integration of these compatible elements of multiculturalism and civism in the core curriculum, the common lessons required of all students in elementary and secondary schools.

Conjoining Multiculturalism and Civism in the Core Curriculum

A necessary characteristic of education for democratic citizenship is a common core of knowledge, cognitive processes, and attitudes, which all students are expected to learn regardless of their race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic class, or vocational prospects. In a country distinguished by its social and cultural diversity, such as the United States of America, a core curriculum serves the civic mission of schools by fostering reasoned, knowledge-based commitment among all citizens, regardless of differences, to fundamental principles, values,

practices, and dispositions of constitutional democracy. This body of basic ideas on democratic citizenship is embedded in America's founding documents and in documents of subsequent periods of United States history that stem directly from the principles and issues of our late eighteenth-century seedbed of constitutional democracy (Center for Civic Education, 1995 and 1997). The pedagogical problem is to select a few of the very best documents available to us, and to organize them effectively for teaching and learning in the classroom.

A worthy list of core documents on American democracy suitable for the core curriculum certainly includes the traditional texts of the founding era, such as the Declaration of Independence, Constitution, Federalist Papers, and Antifederalist Papers (Patrick, 1995). But it also includes pieces by women, African Americans, indigenous peoples, and others that broaden a student's understanding of multiple perspectives and interpretations of key founding-era events. A few examples of non-traditional founding-era documents worthy of inclusion in the core curriculum are a petition against slavery to the General Court of Massachusetts by free African Americans, 1777, which used principles of the Declaration of Independence in arguments for freedom; a letter from three Seneca leaders to President Washington, 1790, which expressed critical opinions about the effects of the American Revolution on indigenous peoples; letters exchanged by Abigail Adams and Mercy Otis Warren on political and social issues of the 1770s; a sermon against slavery by the Reverend James Dana, 1791, and a letter to Thomas Jefferson from Benjamin Banneker, 1791, which included discussion of severe discrepancies between civic ideals of the American Revolution and the condition of black people in the United States (Patrick, 1995, pp. 73-107).

Ideas and controversies about constitutional democracy and the rights and responsibilities

of citizenship, rooted in the founding era, have permeated United States history from the 1770s through the 1990s. Thus, documents in subsequent periods of our country's history, which fit the American civic tradition, should be part of the core curriculum. And they should reflect various voices, diverse perspectives, and multiple interpretations of fundamental ideas, issues, and events in the development of American constitutional democracy (Patrick, 1996, pp. 98-99). A few illustrative examples of the kinds of documents subsequent to the founding era that might be included in the core curriculum are the Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions at Seneca Falls, New York, 1848; The Independence Day Speech by Frederick Douglass at Rochester, New York, 1852; the Gettysburg Address, 1863 and Second Inaugural Address, 1865 by Abraham Lincoln; The Four Freedoms Speech by Franklin D. Roosevelt, 1941, and Letter from Birmingham Jail and the I Have A Dream Speech by Martin Luther King, Jr., 1963 (Center for Civic Education, 1995 and 1997).

Excerpts from certain landmark Supreme Court decisions, which apply fundamental principles of American democracy to key constitutional issues, should also be included in any collection of core documents for secondary school students (Patrick, 1994). Many of these court cases involve issues of majority rule and minority rights, liberty and equality, diversity and unity, which significantly have affected the civic life of diverse individuals and groups in the United States.

A core curriculum of schools that conjoins civism and multiculturalism emphasizes diverse perspectives and interpretations of the key turning points in the history of American constitutional democracy, such as the American Revolution and War of Independence, the Framing of the Constitution and Bill of Rights, the Civil War and Reconstruction, the Great Depression and New

Deal, and the Civil Rights Movement. Education about these critical turning points should address both consensus and conflicts, the common ideas that have bound Americans as one nation and the controversies that have challenged our sense of national unity and community. "In sum, our national constitutional tradition is one of perpetual struggle to balance multiple competing concerns" (Massaro, 1993, p. 127). Thus, multicultural challenges and perspectives on critical issues in our past and present must be part of the civic mission of American schools, if it would be faithful to the history of constitutional democracy in the United States.

Toni Marie Massaro, a professor of constitutional law, has conceived a brilliant design for a core curriculum in elementary and secondary schools that conjoins civism and multiculturalism through analyses and critical appraisal of constitutional principles and issues in United States history. Her position on curriculum and instruction is succinctly and cogently expressed in the following quotation from her laudable publication, *Constitutional Literacy: A Core Curriculum for a Multicultural Nation*:

> Any national curriculum should stress, among other things, the kind of national knowledge that will enable our children to assume the complex duties of American citizenship. This includes not only baseline literacy and historical knowledge but also a rich appreciation of our conflicts and pluralism. . . . [D]emocratic life depends, in part, on having this framework, [which] should include constitutional literacy . . . recognition of constitutional terms, constitutional dilemmas, and historical assumptions upon which the Constitution arguably rests . . . and its multiple contested interpretations. . . . [A]ny national curriculum must be true to our national

experience, but "our" must be defined pluralistically. (1993, p. 153)

In its emphatic concern with both civic unity and diversity, Massaro's core curriculum has the potential to bring multicultural challenges coherently into the civic mission of schools.

How to Treat the Founding Era in the Core Curriculum

Massaro's core curriculum requires emphasis on the founding of the republic, a great turning point in both United States history and world history with continuing significance for Americans and various peoples around the world. Curricular treatments of founding era events, personalities, and ideas, however, must be accurate, balanced, unbiased, and inclusive of various perspectives, if they would avoid the unwarranted mythmaking, "heroification," and other distortions of reality discussed in previous parts of this chapter.

In their pursuit of curricular integrity, educators in elementary and secondary schools, must recognize that threats to accurate and warranted treatments of the American founding era, and other historical periods or themes, may come from both unreconstructed, traditional civic educators and overzealous, ideologically driven multiculturalists. Bland, uncritical, and unrealistic portrayals of the "founding fathers" certainly are unacceptable. So are similarly flawed interpretations of founding-era people, ideas, and events put forward by multicultural educators more interested in promoting preferred social causes than sound social education.

Many prominent multicultural educators excessively and unqualifiedly fault the founders and their era for grievous offenses against freedom, equality, and justice in contradiction of their proclaimed ideals (Banks, 1997, pp. 3-9). Certainly, the constitutional rights guaranteed to most adult white males were not equally applicable to women, black people, and various indigenous peoples. But it is also true that the proportion of Americans with the right to vote or otherwise

participate in their governance was unparalleled in the world of the 1780s. Further, constitutional provisions for certain personal rights we take for granted today, such as freedom of conscience and speech, security against unwarranted seizures of property or invasions of privacy, and due process of law for persons accused of crimes, were rare or nonexistent outside the United States.

Pauline Maier, a founding-era historian, advises us to assess social conditions of the founding era contextually and comparatively. If so, the quality of our judgments may be transformed. She explains:

> Accustomed as we are to emphasizing the continuing problems of gender and race, we are inclined to emphasize the restrictions on early republican citizenship. But against the example of the ancient world, where civic participation was limited to an elite, or indeed, compared to any other nation of the time, American citizenship was extraordinarily comprehensive and has evolved over time toward greater inclusiveness. (Maier, 1996, p. 56)

Slavery, of course, was a cruel contradiction of the founders' ideas about individual rights and dignity. But slavery in the United States, if awful, was not unique in the world of the 1780s. Pronouncements of the American founders about the universality of individual rights, however, were quite unusual, and they became irrepressible standards to which both black and white abolitionists appealed in their successful crusade against slavery (West, 1997, pp. 1-36). Further, historian Bernard Lewis points out that while slavery had been a common phenomenon in the world since ancient times, abolition of slavery was exceptional. Black and white Americans, therefore, who founded and led nineteenth-century abolitionist movements against slavery were

doing something unusual in behalf of human freedom. Lewis writes:

> Alone among the slaveholders of the world, West Europeans and later Americans proceeded not just to the emancipation of their slaves but to the abolition of the institution of slavery--first in their own countries, then in their colonies, finally in the rest of the world wherever peoples of European culture lived or ruled. (Lewis, 1998, p. 24)

An antidote to narrow and excessively critical interpretations of the founding era are three interrelated methods of inquiry used by Maier and Lewis to reach their conclusions stated above: Contextual analysis, comparative analysis, and global perspectives. If students would accurately comprehend people, events, and ideas of the American founding era, then their lessons must be anchored in the social and cultural context of that time. If students would fairly assess and appraise the American founding-era ideas and practices, then they should begin by comparing conditions in the United States with those of other countries at that time in various regions of the world. Some concepts of free government and citizenship of the founding era were daring and practically unique in the late eighteenth-century world. By our standards today, the liberty, equality, and justice of the founding era seem stunted and flawed. But by the world-class standards of their own times, the founders had broken new ground and planted new seeds for an exceptional growth and development of individual rights during the next two centuries.

Classroom studies of the American founding era, which involve the educational methods of contextual and comparative analysis with a global perspective, may be used to conjoin multiculturalism and civism in the core curriculum. These methods are congruent with multicultural concerns about inclusion and recognition of culturally diverse peoples and wide-

ranging perspectives. They also are compatible with the civic mission of schools to develop deep comprehension and justified acceptance of the core principles and values of American constitutional democracy rooted in the founding era. These methods, however, may lead to judgments about the relative worth of particular cultures in responding more or less effectively to certain human problems and needs. This kind of transcultural judgment is anathema to some multicultural educators with extreme commitments to cultural relativism, which compels them to view all cultures as equally worthy. But an unqualified acceptance of cultural relativism is arguable and should be subject to inquiry and debate in free-wheeling, open, and democratic classrooms--the only kind compatible with the civic mission of schools rightly understood.

Education of Citizens for Freedom in the Open Society

Education for citizenship in the free and open society, the genuine modern democracy, develops individuals with capacities and dispositions for critical thinking, reflective inquiry, and free choice about public issues, including controversies about cultural pluralism, assimilation, group membership, and personal identity. It favors free and open competition of ideas in public forums. It encourages a diversity of voices, a multiplicity of perspectives, in the free marketplace of democratic debate. And it guarantees the right of individuals to choose the extent to which they and their groups will preserve traditional ways of living or seek new ones. Thus, an open society and its culture or cultures are fluid, dynamic, and changeable by the free choices of individuals. By contrast, the oppressive and closed society is static and resistant to changes in culture, group membership, and personal identity.

Civic education in the free and open society is charged with a paradoxical mission. Like its opposite, the oppressive and closed society, the open society must, if it would survive, bring

about "conscious social reproduction"--the transmission of hallowed civic traditions from one generation to the next (Gutmann, 1987, pp. 34-46). Unlike the oppressive and closed society, however, it must also encourage an individual's right freely to question and criticize the traditions that are being transmitted to her or him. As students mature, development of their capacities for critical thinking and independent decision making should become a more prominent part of education for democratic citizenship. If so, then civic education is true to a core principle in the tradition of modern democracy, the individual's right to liberty.

Civic education in the free and open society necessarily involves both conscious social reproduction and deliberate development of personal liberty. Social reproduction is necessary to buttress social order that thwarts nihilism and anarchy, inevitable enemies of security for individual liberty. And disciplined critical thinking for choices that bring positive social change is necessary to oppose dysfunctional cultural stagnation associated with an oppressive and closed society (Magee, 1985; Popper, 1966; Shearmur, 1966, pp. 175-178).

Schools that support the free and open society through education for democratic citizenship, then, enable and encourage students to think effectively, responsibly, and independently about important personal and public issues and choices concerning the extent and significance of cultural pluralism and unity in the United States. Thus, these students will be prepared for the inescapable challenges of ongoing controversies about citizenship, identity, assimilation, and rights--about the very meaning of democracy--that Americans will confront in the twenty-first century.

CONCLUSION

From the 1770s to the 1990s, Americans have been concerned and sometimes confounded about cultural diversity, national unity, and personal identity and the civic commitments they entail. According to historian Lawrence Cremin, "Two hundred years after they had made their Revolution, Americans were still in the process of defining what it meant to be an American and hence what they were prepared to teach themselves and their children" (1988, p. 14). In this controversial quest, Americans continue to argue about the proper treatment of civic unity and cultural diversity, civism and multiculturalism, in their educational institutions, especially elementary and secondary schools.

Americans tend to agree that civic education in schools should emphasize core civic principles and values in their country's founding documents, which sociologists have labeled "The American Creed" (Lipset, 1996, p. 31). Sociological surveys of public opinions and attitudes, from the 1950s through the 1990s, reveal strong and abiding support among most Americans for civic principles and values upon which their nation was founded. In 1995, for example, 75 percent of a nationally representative sample of adult respondents said "they are proud to be Americans" (Lipset, 1996, p. 51).

Attachment to civic principles and values of "The American Creed" (e.g., liberty, equality of opportunity, popular sovereignty, the rule of law, and individual rights and responsibilities) signifies one's Americaness. And most Americans want these commonly accepted principles and values to be included emphatically in the school curriculum. Many of these Americans also demand that their schools teach positively about cultural pluralism in the United States and recognize inclusively the contributions of diverse minorities to the common national history and

culture of the United States. And some extreme proponents of multicultural education would have the schools promote "a new 'cultural democracy' and even assert a 'right' to cultural diversity" (Pangle, 1998, p. 174).

Educators in American elementary and secondary schools face the critical challenge of how to blend and balance the competing and sometimes conflicting curricular aims of civism and multiculturalism. Their choices collectively will shape curriculum and instruction about civic unity and multicultural diversity and thereby have a profound impact upon the civic knowledge and values of the next generation of citizens.

Will these students be educated more or less effectively for democratic citizenship in a racially and culturally diverse nation? Can the civic mission of American schools be directed successfully to meet the multicultural challenges of the United States in the twenty-first century? Will we continue our quest to be one American nation distinguished by its capacity somehow to accommodate the complexities, ambiguities, and controversies of conjoining civic and cultural unity with multicultural diversity? The future of our American republic will turn on how well we respond as responsible citizens and civic educators to our ongoing paradoxical problem of how simultaneously and compatibly to treat civism and multiculturalism in the core curriculum of our schools and the fabric of our polity.

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